Amendments to the claims

Claims 1-33. (Canceled)

34. (Previously submitted) An audio program player comprising:

~~an input~~ a communications port for establishing a data communications link for downloading ~~receiving~~ a plurality of separate digital compressed audio program files and a separate sequencing file from ~~an external source~~ one or more server computers,

a digital memory unit coupled to said communications port for persistently storing said separate digital compressed audio program files and ~~for further storing at least one~~ said separate sequencing file, said sequencing file containing data specifying an ordered sequence of a collection of said separate digital compressed audio program files,

an audio output unit including at least one speaker or headset for reproducing said audio program files in audible form perceptible to a listener,

one or more manual controls for accepting commands from said listener, and

a processor for continuously delivering a succession of said audio program files in said collection to said audio output unit in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file in the absence of a program selection command from said listener, and for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of a listener-selected one of said audio program files in said collection in response to a program selection command from said listener.

35. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 34 further comprising a display screen for displaying a ~~visible~~ scrollable listing describing each of said separate digital compressed audio program files in said collection displayed in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file wherein said listener-selected audio program file is chosen by said listener by employing one or more of said manual controls to accept a program selection command from said listener to select one of said audio program files described on said ~~visible~~ scrollable listing for immediate reproduction by said audio output unit.

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36. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 35 wherein said display screen provides a visible indication of said currently playing audio program file in the collection of programs specified by said sequencing file and described on said ~~visible~~ scrollable listing.

37. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 36 wherein said processor responds to a skip forward program selection command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the reproduction of said currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of that audio program file which follows said currently audio program file in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file.

38. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 37 wherein said processor responds to a ~~single~~ skip backward program selection command accepted from said listener at a time when said currently playing audio program file has played for at least a predetermined amount of time by discontinuing the reproduction of said currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of said currently playing audio program file.

39. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 38 wherein said processor responds to ~~two consecutive commands~~ a skip backward program selection command accepted from said listener at a time when said currently playing audio program file has not yet played for said predetermined amount of time for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing program segment and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of a program segment which precedes the currently playing program segment in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file.

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40. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim ~~35 wherein each of said separate digital compressed audio program files stored in said digital memory unit is designated by a unique program identifier and wherein said sequencing file specifies the program identifier of each of the audio program files in said collection~~ 39 wherein said processor responds to a skip forward program selection command when playing the last audio program file in said ordered sequence specified by said sequencing file by continuing reproduction at the beginning of the first audio program file in said sequence, and responds to a skip backward program selection command accepted at a time when said first audio program file is playing but said first audio program file has not yet played for said predetermined amount of time by continuing reproduction at the beginning of the last audio program in said sequence whereby the reproduction of the audio program files specified by said sequencing file can be skipped from beginning to beginning in both the forward or backward direction in a bidirectional endless loop.

41. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 40 wherein each of said separate digital compressed audio program files stored in said digital memory unit is designated by a unique program identifier, wherein said sequencing file specifies the program identifier of each of the audio program files in said collection, and wherein said digital memory unit further stores program description data comprising a plurality of program description records stored separately from said audio program files each of which:

(a) describes a given one of said separate digital compressed audio program files stored in said digital memory unit,

(b) contains or is designated by the unique program identifier designating said given one of said audio program files,

(c) specifies ~~displayable~~ text displayable on said display screen describing said given one of said separate digital compressed audio program files, and

(d) specifies the storage location of said given one of said separate digital compressed audio program files.

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42. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 34 ~~further comprising a communications port for establishing a data communications link to one or more server computers for receiving said audio program files and said sequencing file from said one or more server computers~~ wherein each audio program file in said collection specified by said sequencing file is selected in accordance with program preference data or program selections accepted from said listener to define a playback session that is personalized to the preferences of said listener.

43. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 42 wherein at least some of said separate digital compressed audio program files ~~received~~ downloaded from said one or more server computers are selected by or on behalf of said listener from a catalog listing ~~library~~ of recommended audio program files available from said one or more server computers wherein the audio program files specified in said catalog listing of recommended audio program files are selected in accordance with program preference data or program selections previously accepted from said listener.

44. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 43 wherein at least some of said separate digital compressed audio program files ~~received~~ downloaded from said one or more server computers are specified by requests transmitted by said listener to said one or more server computers via said communication link.

45. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 44 wherein said one or more manual controls include a keyboard for accepting account information from said listener that is transmitted via said communications link to said one or more server computers to establish a subscription account for said listener, said account information including a unique identification of said listener, a password supplied by and known to said listener, and credit card information for use in billing charges to said listener, and wherein at least some of said separate digital compressed audio program files ~~received~~ downloaded from said one or more server

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computers and specified by said requests transmitted by said listener are purchased by said listener and charged to said subscription account.

46. (Currently amended) The audio program player as set forth in claim 42 wherein at least some of said separate digital compressed audio program files received downloaded from said server computer are selected by or recommended by said server computer based on data describing the preferences of or past requests submitted by said listener.

47. (Currently amended) An audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener, said player comprising, in combination:

a memory unit for storing:

(a) a plurality of digital audio program files,

(b) program description data including displayable text describing each of said audio program files, and

(c) at least one separately stored playback session scheduling sequencing file which specifies an ordered sequence of a collection of said plurality of audio program files,

a communications port for downloading at least some of said audio program files and said playback session sequencing file from said one or more server computers, at least some of said audio program files downloaded from said one or more server computers being selected by said listener from a library of audio program files available from said one or more server computers, and said audio program files in said collection specified by said playback session sequencing file being selected by or on behalf of said listener to produce a personalized playback session,

one or more controls for accepting input commands from said listener,

a display screen for presenting a visual menu listing to said listener containing displayable text describing some or all of the audio program files in said collection specified by said sequencing file,

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an audio playback unit for automatically and continuously reproducing said audio program files in said collection in the ordered sequence specified by said playback session ~~scheduling~~ sequencing file in the absence of a control command from said listener, and

a processor <u>for executing one or more utility programs to perform control functions in response to said input commands from a user, said functions including</u>:

(a) ~~responsive~~ <u>in response</u> to <u>a first</u> one of said input commands designating a selected audio program file described on said visual menu listing for causing said audio playback unit to discontinue the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file in said ordered sequence and to instead ~~commence~~ <u>continue</u> the reproduction <u>at the beginning</u> of said selected audio program file,

(b) <u>in response to a second one of said control commands for discontinuing the reproduction of said currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of that audio program file which follows said currently playing audio program file in said ordered sequence specified by said playback session sequencing file,</u>

(c) <u>in response to a third one of said control commands accepted from said listener at a time when said currently playing audio program file has played for at least a predetermined amount of time by discontinuing the reproduction of said currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of said currently playing audio program file, and</u>

(d) <u>in response to said third one of said control commands accepted from said listener at a time when said currently playing audio program file has not yet played for said predetermined amount of time for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of that audio program file which precedes the currently playing program segment in said ordered sequence specified by said playback session sequencing file.</u>

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48. (Previously submitted) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 47 wherein said display screen visually indicates the currently playing audio program file as playing progresses.

49. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 47 further comprising a communications port for receiving said audio program files and said playback session sequencing file from said one or more server computers 48 wherein said memory unit further stores image data files and wherein said processor displays selected ones of said image data files on said display screen concurrently with the reproduction of specified ones of said audio program files in the ordered sequence specified by said playback session sequencing file.

50. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 49 wherein said audio program files received from said one or more server computers are selected by or on behalf of said listener from a library of audio program files available from said one or more server computers said control functions performed by said processor by executing said utility programs further include displaying the time remaining to be played in the audio program file currently being reproduced by a client player in the ordered sequence specified by said playback session sequencing file.

51. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim [[50]] 49 wherein at least some of said program files received from said one or more server computers are specified by requests transmitted to said server computer by said listener via said communications port said one or more of the audio program files in said collection specified by said playback session scheduling file are selected based on preference data indicating subject matter categories of interest to said listener determined by past program selections accepted from said listener,

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52. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 51 at least some of said audio program files ~~received~~ <u>downloaded</u> from said <u>one or more</u> server computer<u>s</u> are purchased by said listener.

53. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 52 wherein said one or more controls include a keyboard for accepting account information from said listener that is transmitted via said communications port to said one or more server computers to establish a subscription account for said listener, said account information including a unique identification for said listener, a password, and credit card information for use in billing charges to said listener, and wherein at least some of said program files ~~received~~ <u>downloaded</u> from said one or more server computers ~~and specified by requests from said listener~~ are purchased by said listener and charged to said subscription account.

54. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 53 wherein said audio program files purchased by said listener are ~~transmitted~~ <u>downloaded</u> to said player in encrypted form and wherein said processor decrypts said ~~purchased~~ audio program files <u>purchased by said listener</u> prior to their reproduction by said audio playback unit.

55. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim [[50]] <u>51</u> wherein ~~at least some of said program files received from said server computer are selected at said server computer based on data describing the preferences of said listener~~ <u>wherein at least some of said utility programs are downloaded via said communications port from said one or more server computers and stored in said memory unit for execution by said processor.</u>

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56. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim [[50]] 55 wherein at least some of said audio program files available from said one or more server computers are organized into subject matter categories and wherein said player transmits a request to said one or more server computers for a catalog listing of programs available in a specified one or more of said categories, said player displays said catalog listing on said display screen, and said player thereafter transmits a request for and receives one or more audio program files specified in said catalog listing of programs for future playback .

57. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 49 further including editing means operable by said listener for 55 wherein said control functions performed by said processor by executing said utility programs further include adding, deleting or reordering one or more of the audio program files in said collection specified by said playback session scheduling sequencing file.

58. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 57 wherein said processor responds to a skip forward input command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of that audio program file which follows said currently audio program file in said ordered sequence specified by said playback session scheduling file 51 wherein some of said audio program files represent episodes in a series of related episodes which are requested as a group by said listener and are thereafter automatically downloaded to said player as said episodes become available for download from said one or more server computers.

59. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 58 wherein said processor responds to a single skip backward command accepted from said listener by discontinuing the

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~~reproduction of the currently playing audio program file and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of said currently playing audio program file~~ 51 wherein the duration of the scheduled playback session specified by the said playback session sequencing file is determined in part by preferences data accepted from said listener.

60. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 59 ~~detection of two consecutive ones of said second commands for discontinuing the reproduction of the currently playing program segment and instead continuing the reproduction at the beginning of a program segment which precedes the currently playing program segment in said ordered sequence specified by said playback session scheduling file~~ 47 wherein specific ones of said audio program files are selected by said listener by downloading and reviewing one or more HTML program selection forms from said one or more server computers via the Internet, selecting said specific ones of said audio program files from audio program files described by said selection forms, and downloading said specific ones of said audio program files from said one or more server computers.

61. (Previously submitted) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 47 wherein each of said audio program files stored in said memory unit is designated by a unique program identifier and wherein said playback session ~~scheduling~~ sequencing file specifies the program identifier of each of the audio program files in said collection.

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62. (Currently amended) The audio program player for automatically playing a collection of audio program files selected by a listener as set forth in claim 61 wherein said program description data comprises a plurality of program description records each of which:

(a) describes a given one of said audio program files stored in said memory unit,

(b) contains or is designated by the unique program identifier [[for]] designating said given one of said audio program files,

(c) specifies said displayable text describing said given one of said audio program files, and

(d) specifies the storage location of said given one of said audio program files.

Claims 63-82.   (Canceled)

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